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This Week in Bridge

(461) Partnership Bidding: Their Major Opening Auctions

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Level: 5 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

When the opponents open the bidding with a Major suit, it is more difficult for us to compete in the bidding than when they open with a minor suit. But we must find ways to fight our way into the auction. In order to do so, we need to have good agreements with partner and we need to be able to have lots of ways to compete in the bidding.

Competitive Bidding

Let's look at how to compete in the bidding when the opponents open with 1-Major.

Example 1

1♠ 3♠?

What does this 3♠ bid mean?

When Opener has a 5+ card ♠ suit, then clearly we do not want to play in ♠. This cuebid is used to ask for a ♠ stopper – a Western Cuebid.

Example 2

♠ AQ954

♥ 8

♦ KQJ42

♣ T7

1♥ ___?

What do we bid with this hand?

When RHO opens the bidding, we don't use Michaels on every hand that has the right shape - we need the right strength as well. Here we simply overcall 1♠. If we use a Michaels Cuebid and partner bids 2♠, we will not know if our hand is strong enough to bid on or if we should leave partner there. This is an example of Michaels Cuebids being either Min (5-11 HCP) or Max (16+ HCP) in values.



Example 3

♠ 8

♥ A53

♦ AK96

♣ AJ652

1♠ X P 3♥

P ___?

What do we bid now?

Bid 3♠! When partner makes a jump advance of our takeout double they show strength, not length, in their suit (they could still have only 4-cards). When we have a good hand and want to accept the invite but do not have 4-card support, we should not raise. Instead, we cuebid 3♠, implying that we have extra values, but no known fit, and no ♠ stopper.

Example 4

1♥ P 1NT 2♥?

What does this 2♥ bid mean in the sandwich seat?

This 2♥ bid is a Michaels Cuebid, showing a 5+card ♠ suit and a 5+card minor. It usually has either min or max values – depending on our partnership agreements.

Conclusion

Competing in the bidding after the opponents open the bidding with 1-Major is somewhat less confusing than when the opponents open with a minor. When they start with a 5+card suit, it is clearer that bidding their suit cannot be natural. Working together with partner you should be able to use cuebids of the opponent's suit to help you describe your hand. Make sure you discuss these auctions with partner in some detail, it is worth the time!